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NET NEUTRALITY REPEALED

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FEEL THE FORCE

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GREGORY WAKEMAN, FEATURES REPORTER

Cue John Williams, because "Star Wars: The Last Jedi" is finally upon us! Rian Johnson's sci-fi epic does not disappoint — not only does the writer and director embrace the old, but he propels the franchise forward in a stirring, complex and hilarious fashion. We've got plenty of "Star Wars" goodies for you to enjoy in the hours leading down to your movie ticket, including a discussion with Luke Skywalker himself.

ALABAMA SENATE WINNER URGES RIVAL TO 'MOVE ON'

Alabama Democrat Doug Jones, who won a bitter fight for a U.S. Senate seat this week, on Thursday called on his Republican opponent to concede the race and help heal the Southern state after a deeply divisive contest. Roy Moore, the conservative Christian Republican whose campaign was tainted by accusations that he pursued teenaged girls while in his 30s, made a second statement on Wednesday night in which he did not concede the election. Jones, a former federal prosecutor, will be the first Democrat to hold a Senate seat in Alabama in a quarter-century, narrowing Republicans' majority in the Senate to 51 of 100 seats and potentially making it more difficult for them to pursue President Donald Trump's agenda. With 99 percent of the vote counted, Jones had a lead of 1.5 percentage points over Moore.

FIREFIGHTER KILLED BATTLING CALIF. BLAZE

2 A firefighter was killed while battling a massive wildfire burning in Ventura and Santa Barbara counties, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire) said on Thursday. A department spokesman said the firefighter was an engineer from the San Diego Unit deployed to the so-called Thomas Fire but declined to give further details, citing a need to gather the facts first. The Thomas Fire grew overnight to the fourth-largest blaze of its kind on record in California, at 242,500 acres burned. The fire grew larger than the Zaca Fire of 2007, which, like the Thomas Fire, struck Santa Barbara County. Cal Fire said on Thursday morning that the Thomas blaze was 30 percent contained, unchanged from Wednesday evening.

GETTY IMAGES

PREMIERE

3 A general view of atmsophere at the "Star Wars: The Last Jedi" Canadian Premiere held at Scotiabank Theatre in Toronto.

DISNEY BUYING FOX FILM, TV UNITS FOR $52 BILLION

4 Walt Disney Co has struck a deal to buy film, television and international businesses from Rupert Murdoch's Twenty-First Century Fox Inc for $52.4 billion in stock, giving the world's largest entertainment company an arsenal of shows and movies to combat growing digital rivals Netflix and Amazon. The deal brings to a close more than half a century of expansion by Murdoch, 86, who turned the single Australian newspaper he inherited from his father at the age of 21 into one of the world's most important global news and film conglomerates. The new, slimmed-down Fox will focus on TV news and sports. Shares of Fox, which have surged more than 30 percent since talk of the deal surfaced in early November, climbed 4.1 percent in midday trading.

RECORD NUMBER TO TRAVEL DURING HOLIDAY

5 U.S. travelers will hit the roads, rails and skies this Christmas holiday in their largest numbers on record, lured by cheap plane tickets and a growing economy, the nation's largest motor advocacy group said. Roughly 107.3 million Americans will journey 50 miles or more from home during Dec. 23 through Jan. 1, a 3.1 percent increase from a year earlier and the most ever recorded, AAA said in a report. That would be the sixth consecutive record high for the holiday season, the Heathrow, Florida-based organization said. "More expensive gas prices are not swaying holiday revelers to stay home," AAA senior vice president Bill Sutherland said. "We've seen the strong economy and growing consumer confidence fuel holiday travel all year long." The largest share of travel, roughly 90.7 percent, will be on U.S. roads.

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As we enter the season of giving, Metro asks that you donate to Tony's Metro Magic annual holiday toy drive to help underprivileged children in your community. You can donate by visiting metro.us/magic, clicking on the toy wish-list link of your choice, and ordering via a secure payment system. Toys will then be distributed to local children in need.

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Service providers have promised not to interfere with content. GETTY IMAGES

The FCC repealed net neutrality. Now what?

Advocacy groups have promised to put up a fight.

SAM BRODSKY
@sammybrods
Samantha.Brodsky@metro.us

On Thursday, the FCC voted in favor of repealing laws under Title II protecting net neutrality despite heavy protest. The vote came out 3-2 (Republicans to Democrats).

"Two years ago, the orders stripped the FCC of jurisdiction over broadband providers," Chairman Ajit Pai said in a speech before the final vote. "Today, the FCC will once again have the authority to take action against Internet service providers that engage in any competitive, unfair or deceptive acts."

Pai stated that following the vote, "Americans will still be able to access the websites they want to visit. They will still be able to enjoy the services they want to enjoy."

Advocacy groups

A coalition of advocacy groups will fight for Congress to overturn the vote.

"Now that the FCC has voted to end net neutrality rules, only Congress can keep the rules in place," stated the Battle for the Net petitioning site. "With a simple majority vote in both houses, they can use the Congressional Review Act to vote on a 'Resolution of Disapproval' that overrules the FCC vote. But to do that, they need to hear from constituents." The group is calling on the public to fight with them and write or call Congress: "Text BATTLE to 384-387 to contact Congress and stop the FCC."

One advocacy group, Free Press, tweeted after the vote that they have a message for Pai: "We'll see you in court."

"Free Press will take the FCC to court to challenge its reversal on the proper definition of broadband, the accuracy of its contentious justifications for tossing out the rules, and the many process fouls that have plagued the FCC proceeding since it began earlier this year," the group wrote in a statement.

Broadband providers

Broadband providers like AT&T, Comcast and Version have promised not to block or interfere with content, reports WIRED.

Bob Quinn, AT&T senior executive vice president of external and legislative affairs, said in a blog post on Thursday the following statement: "In short, the internet will continue to work tomorrow just as it always has. Despite the existence and the enforceability of all of these commitments, we have, since 2010, also repeatedly called for a non-Title II legislative solution that would make these consumer protections permanent. We continue to support a legislative solution and will work with any interested members of Congress to achieve that solution."

FCC commissioners

The two Democratic FCC commissioners who voted against the repeal, Jessica Rosenworcel and Mignon Clyburn, expressed their outrage.

Rosenworcel tweeted: "The FCC voted to roll back net neutrality today. History will not be kind to this vote to destroy Internet openness. But this is not over. I'm not stopping here or now–and neither should you. Let's keep up the fight. Let's keep raising a ruckus. The future depends on it."

Clyburn also took to Twitter, stating: "Consumers not cable companies should decide how notification of price increase and service changes are delivered to the customer."

Rosenworcel concluded hers with a powerful declaration: "I, too, am frustrated. But here's a twist: I hear you. I listen to what callers are saying. I read the countless, individually written e-mails in my in-box, the posts online, and the very short and sometimes very long letters. And I'm not going to give up—and neither should you. If the arc of history is long, we are going to bend this toward a more just outcome. In the courts. In Congress. Wherever we need to go to ensure that net neutrality stays the law of the land."

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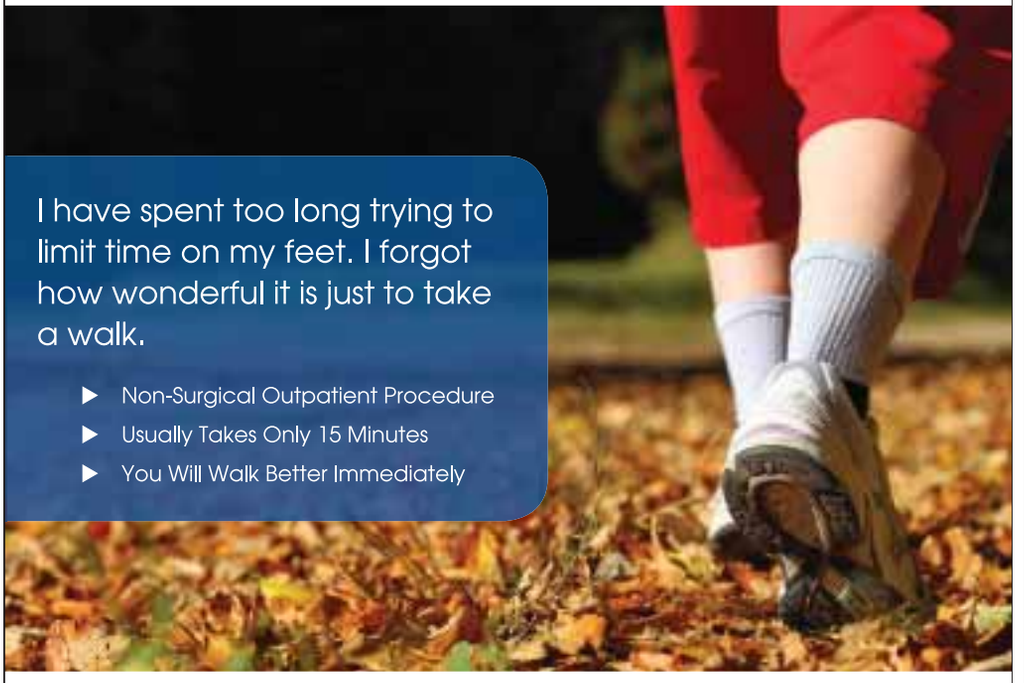

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An expert reveals what the internet without net neutrality will mean for you

Maybe you've seen your friends or people in your social media feeds freaking out about net neutrality and posting photos and text about #BreakTheInternet. Maybe it still seems somewhat abstract to you.

Metro talked exclusively with Steve Weisman, senior lecturer in law, taxation and financial planning at Bentley University, who teaches about net neutrality in his media law class.

Will we have service provider options or will it be like choosing the best of the worst?

Weisman: There rarely is anything "fine" in "fine print." Internet service provider contracts are pretty much unreadable, but the good news is that you won't have too many choices to compare. The bad news is that many people already have little or no choice in regard to internet service providers – and therein lies the problem. With little, if any, competition, the ISPs pretty much can do what they want and offer the packages they want.

Does that mean we could have to pick and choose which of our favorite services we have access to or have to shell out for more than one?

We well could see ISPs making individual deals with specific providers leaving consumers in a position of having to choose providers who may or may not provide the services they want at the speeds necessary to make them usable and competitive. Packages like the ones we already see in the cable industry where you pay higher rates for specific channels and bundles that contain channels you don't want in order to get the channels you do want could become common with ISPs. We have already seen this business model used in Germany.

What do you think is going to happen in terms of rate increases in your bills?

While you may see some initial promotional rates, those rates will go away and, ultimately, you will find that with little, if any, competition between ISPs, there is no incentive for them not to raise rates. In addition, you will see some of the content providers passing on their new costs of doing business to the consumer by raising their fees as well.

How will access to content change?

Content providers who can't afford to pay the new higher fees for "fast lane" service will unfortunately be unable to compete, innovation will be stifled and new businesses will be tremendously harmed. Consumer choices will be reduced. Since most consumers don't have the patience for slow loading websites, those that can't pay the higher fees are doomed.

Are there consequences that no one's talking about?

In recent years, the ISPs have been getting involved in owning the creators of content. For example, Comcast owns NBC Universal and USA Network, and if the proposed AT&T merger with Time-Warner goes through, AT&T will own HBO, WB, CNN, Cinemax, TNT and other content creators. With the demise of net neutrality, nothing prevents the ISPs from blocking or slowing down their content providing competitors, which is tantamount to censorship.

Since net neutrality is repealed, when would be the first chance to get it back?

Net neutrality could be overridden by Congress either through disapproving the regulation or by establishing statutes that would permanently protect this important right. However, Congress won't act unless there is tremendous outcry from the public. A court challenge could be done that would argue that the new regulations are void as being arbitrary and capricious, but the legal process is long and slow and there is no guarantee that such a lawsuit would be successful.

LINNEA ZIELINSKI

Thursday's vote to repeal net neutrality rules has many people concerned about the future of the open internet. GETTY IMAGES

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Drivers in New York honk at pedestrians more than any other state, report says

New Yorkers are known to be a bit aggressive.

KRISTIN TOUSSAINT
@kristindakota
kristin.toussaint@metro.us

Car horns can seem like part of the New York soundtrack, and it's not just your imagination.

Drivers here honk at pedestrians more often than in any other state, according to a new report.

New Yorkers are known to be a bit intense, and that aggression often comes out when people are commuting. Road rage doesn't only extend to other cars, of course, but also to the thousands of pedestrians on New York City streets.

So how well do the two groups of commuters get along? Auto-insurance resource insurancequotes.com recently released its Drivers Vs. Pedestrians report, in which 500 drivers and 500 pedestrians talked about their roadway behavior in 2017.

Overall in New York state, 91 percent of pedestrians say that drivers have honked at them. Illinois came in second, with 74 percent of pedestrians there saying that they've been honked at.

Seventy-one percent of New York pedestrians say that drivers here have yelled at them, as well. Florida comes in behind New York for this statistic, with 60 percent of pedestrians there saying they've been yelled at by someone behind the wheel.

But it's not just drivers that have road rage. Pedestrians in New York strike more cars than those on foot in any other state, according to the report, with 27 percent of drivers here saying someone walking by has aggressively hit their vehicle.

Though they may strike the cars, at least pedestrians here don't throw things at them often. Texas came on top for that statistic, with 18 percent of drivers there saying that a pedestrian threw something at their moving car. In New York, only 4 percent of drivers reported such an instance.

Pedestrians here may get honked at a lot because they also frequently step into a crosswalk without looking, the report found.

91%
OVERALL IN NEW YORK STATE, 91 PERCENT OF PEDESTRIANS SAY THAT DRIVERS HAVE HONKED AT THEM.

In New York, 85 percent of pedestrians go to cross a street without looking. They're actually not the worst offenders, though — that honor goes to Illinois, where 90 percent of pedestrians enter crosswalks without checking for oncoming cars.

Pedestrians and drivers can't seem to agree on who's at fault, either. More than two-thirds of pedestrians said that they've nearly been hit by a car, citing bad driver behavior. On the driver's side, though, more than 90 percent of those behind the wheel said they've seen pedestrians jaywalking, laying the blame on them for not obeying the rules.

Ultimately, both are to blame, because both pedestrians and drivers make errors and have "extreme emotions," according to insuranceQuotes. Maybe every New Yorker should seek out some anger management, at least just concerning their commute.

New York drivers also tend to yell at pedestrians more than drivers in other states, the report found. METRO FILE PHOTO

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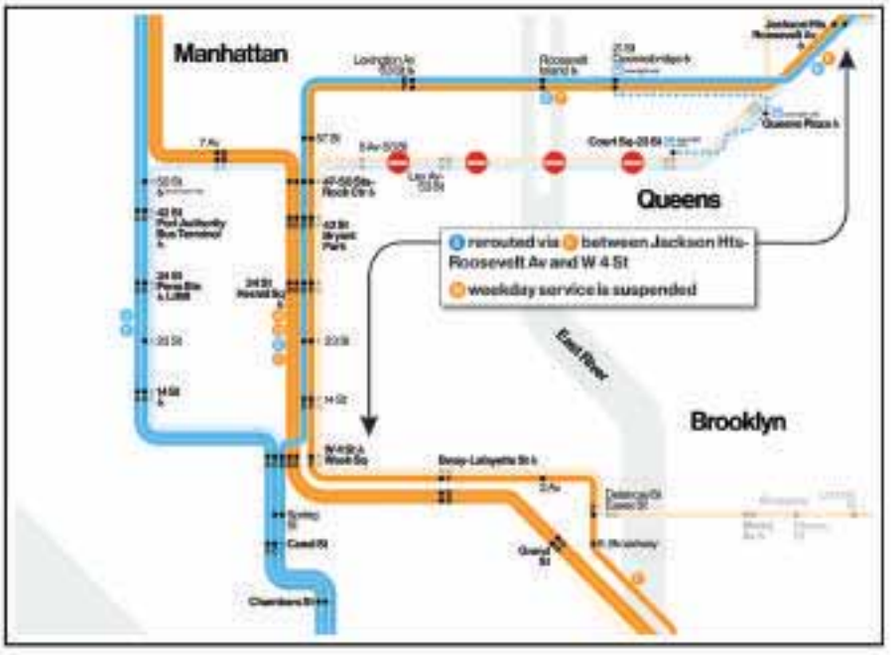

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Flu is widespread in New York state, health department says

Have you gotten your flu shot? The infection is widespread in New York, the state's health department warned.

Influenza, aka the flu, is now prevalent in New York, Health Commissioner Dr. Howard Zucker said this week, meaning any healthcare workers who have not been vaccinated are required to wear masks around patients.

This flu season, New York has had 1,820 laboratory-confirmed cases of influenza in 54 counties and all five boroughs of New York City.

There have also been 612 influenza-related hospitalizations reported in the state. There have been no reports of pediatric deaths from influenza.

Each year in New York City alone, more than 2,000 New Yorkers die of seasonal influenza and pneumonia, which can often develop as a complication of the flu, according to the city.

Flu season is prominent from October to May and often peaks in February. ISTOCK

Over the past three flu seasons, New York state saw 19 pediatric influenza deaths. Overall, there's an average of 11,182 influenza-related hospitalizations each flu season, according to the Department of Health.

"Vaccination is the best way to protect against influenza and is especially important for healthcare workers," Zucker said in a statement. "I encourage all New Yorkers older than six months to get their influenza shot as soon as possible."

Flu season is prominent from October to May and often peaks in February. But it's not too late to get vaccinated, the health department said.

The vaccine is especially important, experts said, for those who are vulnerable to influenza-related complications, including children under 2, pregnant women, adults 65 and older and those with conditions like asthma and heart disease.

KRISTIN TOUSSAINT

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					2 people	$27,085 - $38,200
2 bedrooms		$872	7	→	2 people	$32,503 - $38,200
					3 people	$32,503 - $42,950
					4 people	$32,503 - $47,700
3 bedrooms		$1,004	3	→	3 people	$37,749 - $42,950
					4 people	$37,749 - $47,700
					5 people	$37,749 - $51,550
					6 people	$37,749 - $53,350

60% AREA MEDIAN INCOME (AMI) UNITS	Monthly Rent[1]	Units Available		House-hold Size[2]	Annual Household Income[3] *Minimum – Maximum*[4]
	$880	17	→	1 person	$32,640 - $40,080
				2 people	$32,640 - $45,840
	$1,066	29	→	2 people	$39,155 - $45,840
				3 people	$38,155 - $51,540
				4 people	$39,155 - $57,240
	$1,229	18	→	3 people	$45,463 - $51,540
				4 people	$45,463 - $57,240
				5 people	$45,463 - $61,860
				6 people	$45,463 - $66,420

[1] Tenant responsible for electric • [2] Household size includes everyone who will live with you, including parents and children. Subject to occupancy criteria.
[3] Household earnings includes salary, hourly wages, tips, Social Security, child support, and other income. Income guidelines subject to change.
[4] Minimum income listed may not apply to applicants with Section 8 or other qualifying rental subsidies. Asset limits also apply.

How Do You Apply?

Apply online or through mail. To apply online, please go to nyc.gov/housingconnect. To request an application **by mail, send a self-addressed envelope to: St. Augustine c/o The Wavecrest Management Team, 87-14 116th Street, Richmond Hill, NY 11418.** Only send one application per development. Do not submit duplicate applications. Do not apply online and also send in a paper application. Applicants who submit more than one application may be disqualified.

When is the Deadline?

Applications must be postmarked or submitted online no later than **February 15, 2018**. Late applications will not be considered.

What Happens After You Submit an Application?

After the deadline, applications are selected for review through a lottery process. If yours is selected and you appear to qualify, you will be invited to an interview to continue the process of determining your eligibility. Interviews are usually scheduled from 2 to 10 months after the application deadline. You will be asked to bring documents that verify your household size, identity of members of your household, and your household income.

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简体中文

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العربية

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Mark Hamill, the modest Jedi

wknd

"It's about time to re-meet Mark's Skywalker."
ALL PHOTOS LUCASFILM

He's not "just" Luke Skywalker —he's one of the greatest movie heroes of all time.

GABRIEL HUERTA
MWN
@sigfrid

As the world prepares for the year's most anticipated movie release, Metro had the opportunity to speak with Mark Hamill and learn about his return to the franchise, his place within the cast, his opinions on spoilers and more.

He first hit the big screen as Skywalker a whopping 40 years ago, and has donned a light saber in subsequent sequels over the decades that followed. So what should we expect from Hamill in "The Last Jedi"?

According to him, he doesn't consider himself the protagonist of the film. Rather, his role "is more akin to what Sir Alec Guinness did in our films," Hamill says, and thus he'll become more of an ensemble actor than all-encompass-

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ing sun in the center of the Star Wars universe. This despite director Rian Johnson mentioning that Luke Skywalker's role "is going to be the centerpiece of this movie."

So … how much Hamill? "At least twice as much as in Episode VII," he says.

For him, returning to the saga was somewhat surreal.

"I never expected to come back," Hamill tells us. "We had a beginning, a middle and an end, and in like any fairy tale, they lived happily ever after. All conflicts were resolved. We were under the impression that Episodes VII, VIII and IX would be so far in the future that we wouldn't be involved. When we found out that they wanted us back, it was a combination of exhilaration and sheer terror."

Part of this terror was disappointing the franchise's deeply loyal fan base. Internally, Hamill had conditioned his return to what his old pal Harrison Ford decided, since for him "it was like reforming the group — if the drummer doesn't come back, the bass player doesn't come back, the lead singer … It's not a true reunion."

And to his surprise, Ford jumped on the bandwagon. And just like that, the gang was all there.

"Everyone is coming back, the fans will hate me if I say no, and I'm sure I wouldn't say no, but Harrison was the catalyst," Hamill recalls.

Despite being one of the actors of the original trilogy, Hamill didn't feel the need to teach his newer castmates a thing, and considers each one "accomplished on their own." And with names like Oscar Isaac, Domhnall Gleeson, Andy Serkis, Gwendoline Christie, Benicio del Toro and Laura Dern on the roster, humbly admits "they don't need advice from me! If anything, I should be the one asking for advice."

With so many big names, and with a franchise of this size, how was it possible to keep things as secretive as they have for the Dec. 15 premiere of "The Last Jedi," especially considering the whole "I am your father" level of plot twists audiences can expect?

"It's so hard!" he reveals.

"The line written in the script [of "The Empire Strikes Back"] was 'You don't know the truth — Obi-Wan killed your father!' It was a burden to keep the secret, but there were so many extras playing Stormtroopers … and within three days of filming that scene, the cover of one tabloid was: 'Guinness head baddie in Star Wars 2.' I was so thrilled that they leaked fake information!"

Three days seems like forever in the modern 24-hour TMZ cycle, so Hamill took to Twitter and wrote "People, please, keep the secrets of [Episode] VIII to yourself."

In the words of Yoda, "Do. Or do not. There is no try."

Thankfully, the wait is over, and we can learn the secrets for ourselves on screen.

Meet the Force's new Rey of light

Daisy Ridley's saber skills are astounding. ALL PHOTOS LUCASFILM

"Star Wars: The Last Jedi"

Director: Rian Johnson
Stars: Mark Hamill, Daisy Ridley, Adam Driver, Gwendoline Christie, Domhnall Gleeson, the late Carrie Fisher, Billie Lourd, Andy Serkis, Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Laura Dern, Oscar Isaac, Benicio Del Toro, Kelly Marie Tran, Justin Theroux, John Boyega and more!
Rating: PG-13

●●●●○

Prepare yourself now, because as soon as you've seen "Star Wars: The Last Jedi" you're gonna need a few minutes to absorb what you've just seen and experienced. Writer and director Rian Johnson doesn't give you a moment's time to reflect, as the movie features ambitious storytelling, other-worldly set pieces and visuals so striking your mouth will have likely been open for a good portion of the last 2.5 hours (yep, it's a long one).

And while familiar, this is a "Star Wars" film that isn't overly beholden to its past; instead it plays with the tropes, themes and characters of its (seven … depending on how you count them) predecessors in a way that's unsettling but necessary.

You'll immediately understand why Lucasfilm trusted Rian Johnson with his own "Star Wars" trilogy — while the humor (this is arguably the funniest film in the entire franchise) and all-round fun that we've come to expect from "Star Wars" is there, "The Last Jedi" is more political, emotionally complex and muddled than the other seven movies.

And not all of it works.

First, the premise: Rey, played by the formidable Daisy Ridley, is dabbling in the world of the Jedi. As such she meets up with Luke Skywalker, OG Jedi (played by Mark Hamill, but you already knew that), and the two go on a quest with Leia (expect a few moviegoers to shed a tear when they see the late, great Carrie Fisher in her final performance) and crew to get to the bottom of the thing we call "the Force."

Now, the execution.

Some of its surprises and twists underwhelm. Things are never so drastic that "The Last Jedi" flounders — just so intense and new that it's, at times, disconcerting. This is a film you'll need to watch more than once to truly connect with.

Luke and Leia, together for the last time

But those worries are quickly eclipsed by the moments and shocks that do land. Ferociously. So much so that you'll want to get out of that assigned, reclining $20 movie theater seat and shout for joy. And while the film doesn't necessarily drag, you'll really feel its overwhelming length.

Ultimately, "The Last Jedi" might not be the greatest "Star Wars" film ever made, as it lacks the wonderment and joy of "The Empire Strikes Back" and "A New Hope." But we're pretty sure that could never be repeated and those movies are nearly impossible to eclipse.

But "The Last Jedi" IS the film from which a new galaxy and universe will build, as it taps into what made its past so glorious, propels it forward and gives the "Star Wars" franchise the rejuvenation that it never even knew it needed.

"The Last Jedi" is out in theaters now.

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‘Star Wars,’ by the numbers

The stats behind your favorite franchise

JOSHUA CROUTHAMEL
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With “The Last Jedi” hitting theaters now, we thought we’d take a calculated stroll down memory lane.

“Episode IV — A New Hope”
Year: 1977
Length: 121 minutes
Estimated Budget: $11 million
Estimated Box Office: $775 million
Interesting $/number fact: The budget was so small, the actors flew coach

“Episode V — The Empire Strikes Back”
Year: 1980
Length: 124 minutes
Estimated Budget: $18-33 million
Estimated Box Office: $536 million
Interesting $/number fact: George Lucas had to take out a bank loan to fund it, but due to its success, he paid employees millions in bonuses

“Episode VI — Return of the Jedi”
Year: 1983
Length: 132 minutes
Estimated Budget: $33-43 million
Estimated Box Office: $475-572 million
Interesting $/number fact: It took six people to move Jabba the Hutt

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“Episode I — The Phantom Menace”
Year: 1999
Length: 133 minutes
Estimated Budget: $115 million
Estimated Box Office: $1 billion
Interesting $/number fact: In those early internet days, trailers could only be seen at the cinema, and it’s estimated that 75 percent of moviegoers paid full price for a different flick just to see the “Episode I” trailer, and then walked out

“Episode II — Attack of the Clones”
Year: 2002
Length: 142 minutes
Estimated Budget: $115 million
Estimated Box Office: $650 million
Interesting $/number fact: This is the first time Yoda didn’t require a salary and was created entirely with CGI

“Episode III — Revenge of the Sith”
Year: 2005
Length: 140 minutes
Estimated Budget: $113 million
Estimated Box Office: $850 million
Interesting $/number fact: The original cut ran for over three hours

“Episode VI — The Force Awakens”
Year: 2015
Length: 135 minutes
Estimated Budget: $306 million
Estimated Box Office: $2 billion
Interesting $/number fact: This is the third movie in history to break into $2 billion territory (after “Avatar” and “Titanic”)

“Episode VIII — The Last Jedi”
Year: 2017
Length: 152 minutes
Estimated Budget: Can you put a price on this?
Estimated Box Office: To be determined …
Interesting $/number fact: The “Star Wars” logo appears in red for the first time … possibly to commemorate the film’s 40 years (the ruby anniversary)?

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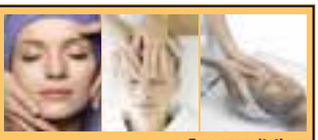
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Meet Jedi Jesus, founder Daniel M. Jones. BOTH PHOTOS BECOMETHEFORCE.COM

There's a 'Star Wars' church, and it might just change your life

No , really.

GREGORY WAKEMAN
@MetroNewYork
gregory.wakeman@metro.us

Lifelong "Star Wars" fan Daniel M. Jones has founded the Church of Jedi-ism — a spiritual movement that looks to empower the mind, body and soul.

We sat down with the high priest to learn a bit about what's involved.

First of all, WHY?
Jones: I'd been a huge researcher on UFOs, conspiracy theories, the meaning of life — all that kind of bizarre, mystical stuff — for years. And I was an avid "Star Wars" fan, too. I even rented the VHS so often I broke the tape. I just thought that these things fuse together so brilliantly.

How many members do you have?
Apart from places like North Korea and Antarctica, I'm pretty sure we have members everywhere. Our estimated follower-ship is about half a million to a million, but our registered active members on our website is about 32,000.

What does being part of the religion entail?
There's a study guide, you read the book, and then you can progress beyond that. There are nine core lessons that everyone needs to learn. The more you do, the more points you get, and that builds into a mastership. It's a personal-growth thing.

As the congregations of traditional churches decline, what's it about your religion that boosts membership?
Millennials have been looking for ways to get stoked about being alive again. Ways to get spiritually awakened. Every millennial I know says, "I'm not religious. But I feel a connection to the universe." They check out yoga, meditation, they love mindfulness, they always go to the gym, and they know that there is something bigger out there. Spirituality has had a really bad name because of religion and terrorism and all this rubbish. But spirituality is a way of you connecting to the universe and nature.

Were you inspired by other religions?
I always tell people that the book is Buddhism for idiots.

If you're ready to blow out the candles on your menorah, take down your Christmas tree or chuck your prayer mat, visit BecomeTheForce.com for more info.

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The New York Mets could be interested in Cleveland Indians' second baseman Jason Kipnis this winter. GETTY IMAGES

Mets searching the second-base market?

The Mets have some question marks on the right side of their infield and are in need of a legitimate option at second.

JOE PANTORNO
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It looks as though the 2017 Winter Meetings will be another frustrating time for New York Mets fans as the team continues to act like a small-market club, missing out or just ignoring clear-cut needs on its roster.

They did manage to bring in reliever Anthony Swarzak on Wednesday in an attempt to better a floundering bullpen, but the Mets have to do so much more before being considered a legitimate contender in the National League East.

Among those needs is a legitimate second baseman as the Mets traded away Neil Walker over the summer, forcing usual shortstop Asdrubal Cabrera — who was usurped from his position by top prospect Amed Rosario — to play both second and third.

With Cabrera slated to start the year at third, Wilmer Flores is their only possible starting option right now. However, he would be more impactful as a utility infielder who would be featured in lineups against left-handers. It's already been proven that he cannot be an everyday player.

The Mets have been somewhat active on the trade market in terms of finding a second baseman as they were linked to Detroit Tigers second baseman Ian Kinsler. But the veteran had the Mets on his list of teams he did not want to be traded to and was dealt to the Los Angeles Angels on Wednesday.

According to Marc Carig of Newsday, the Mets still might be in on Jason Kipnis of the Cleveland Indians, Josh Harrison of the Pittsburgh Pirates and Cesar Hernandez of the Philadelphia Phillies.

Kipnis has been inconsistent and injury-riddled over his past few years with the Indians. Playing in only 90 games last season, the 30-year-old hit just .232. It was an anticlimactic return from a 2016 campaign that saw him hit a career-high 23 home runs with 82 RBI.

Harrison hit a career-high 16 home runs last season as a utility man, but the Pirates could be looking to shed some salary as Harrison is slated to make $10 million. Acquiring him would give the Mets not only an option at second but at third also should they wish to rotate him and Cabrera.

Hernandez might be the most talented of the three, coming off a season in which he sported a .793 OPS while batting .294 with a .373 on-base percentage. He would solve the Mets' problem of looking for a lead-off man and provide a shot in the arm to a team whose on-base percentage last year was a below-average .320.

However, the asking price for Hernandez will likely be the highest and the Mets don't necessarily have a ton of assets they could offer.

Should the team fail to acquire a legitimate second baseman, Jose Reyes could be brought back via free agency to play the position. That provides little consolation for a team that needs an injection of new talent.

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Casting 'Star Wars' with sports stars

Metro New York has "Star Wars" fever, even the sports department.

JOE PANTORNO
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You simply will not find a cinematic franchise that can generate as much buzz as "Star Wars".

Spanning 40 years now, the eight films and countless shows, video games and specials that followed continue to captivate millions around the world including the most ardent of sports fanatics.

So obviously, with the much-anticipated release of Episode VIII rapidly approaching, we here at Metro decided to put our heads together in an attempt to recast some of the movies most iconic characters with today's biggest sports stars.

Sure, it might be difficult to try and find similarities between Jedi, Wookies, droids and professional athletes, but it's a heck of a lot easier than hitting a 100-mile-per-hour fastball or defeating the Sith.

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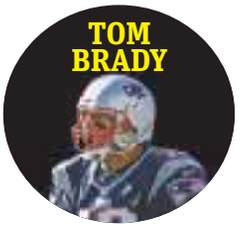
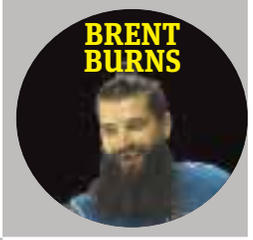


The hood, the snarl, the evil. How is this not the absolute perfect match? They're the faces of evil.

The old master still has plenty of fire and is willing to teach even the most unlikely students.

Burns is tall, hairy and even wore a Chewbacca mask at the 2016 NHL All-Star Game.



We don't know how good Keys can be, like Rey, but the upside is extremely promising.

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NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that a license, Serial # 1306823, for Wine & Beer has been applied for by the undersigned to sell Wine & Beer at retail under the Alcoholic Beverage Control Law at 667 Classon Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11238. Kings County, for on premise consumption. Natural Tree LLC.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that a license, Serial # 1306885, for Liquor, Wine & Beer has been applied for by the undersigned to sell Liquor, Wine & Beer at retail under the Alcoholic Beverage Control Law at 107-12 70th Rd., Forest Hills, NY 11375. Queens County, for on premise consumption. MCRB Corp.

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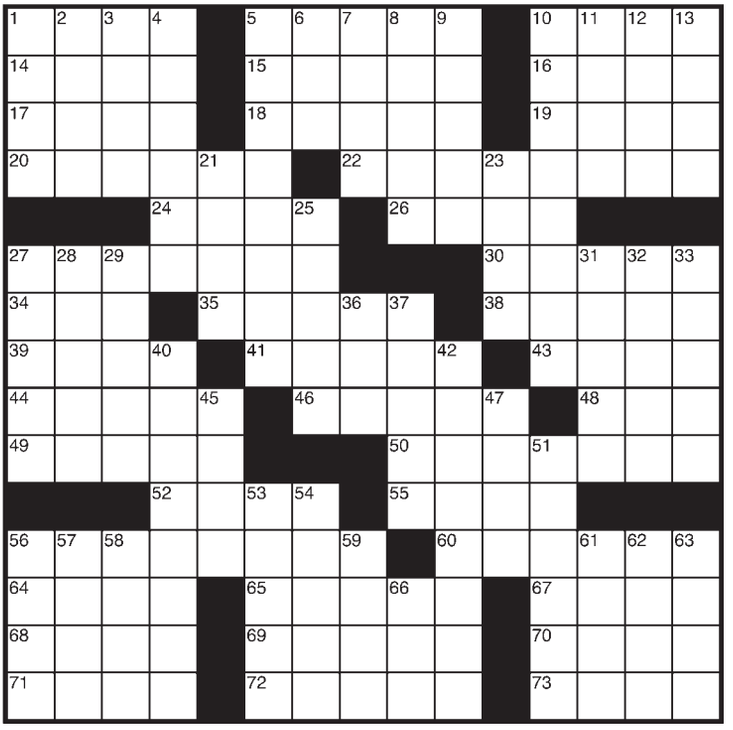
Across
1 Barter
5 Mombasa's country
10 Yacht feature
14 Sanskrit dialect
15 Broadcast again
16 Internet fan
17 Idyllic spot
18 -- to the teeth
19 Pleasant
20 Croquet hoop
22 Stretch
24 Orchid-like blossom
26 Dull
27 Poet Maya --
30 Garment parts
34 Beluga delicacy
35 Over
38 Behavior pattern
39 Zest
41 Scientist Carl --
43 European alliance
44 Basket willow
46 Kim of "Picnic"
48 Three before V
49 Sentimental, maybe
50 Tallest peak
52 Cartoon shrieks
55 King's address
56 Resolves a problem (2 wds.)
60 Hansel's sister
64 Temperament
65 Insurance center
67 Boxing win
68 Ax cousin
69 Shot
70 Co. honcho
71 Can't do without
72 Vista
73 Storage medium

Down
1 Pour out
2 Dry watercourse
3 Actor -- Baldwin
4 Little finger
5 Some military meals (2 wds.)
6 At all times, poetically
7 Signature
8 Cede
9 Warmth of feeling
10 Asian legume (2 wds.)
11 -- Minor
12 Splinter group
13 Fruit bearer
21 Perry's creator
23 Ogden or old car
25 Khartoum's land
27 Item in a quiver
28 Disturbing sound
29 Spirit in a bottle
31 Bring down in status
32 Hands, slangily
33 Dark ale
36 Swelled head
37 Brubeck and Letterman
40 Relied
42 Steer
45 Whiskey grains
47 Deborah of old films
51 Had an odor
53 Weirdos
54 Poisonous shrub
56 Bowie's wife
57 Went by horseback
58 Slime
59 Duct --
61 Hack's vehicle
62 Inspects
63 Deadbolt
66 Barbarian



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easy

		5			7			
3	2		1				8	
4		9			3	2		
		6	3		5			
2		8				9		3
			8		6	5		
		3	4			7		2
	6				1		5	8
			5			3		

hard

	9	7	5		8		2	
						9	7	
	3							8
8	4				5	7		2
			4		2			
6		1	3				4	5
5							8	
	1	8						
	6		8		7	2	3	

metro.us/horoscopes

Aries Be wary of anyone trying to fill your head with false information. Go to the source and find out firsthand what's true and what isn't before you take action.

Taurus Someone you have helped in the past will have a solution to a problem you face. Don't hesitate to call in favors or to ask for help.

Gemini Getting along with your peers will take ingenuity and the willingness to be a team player. Do your own fact-finding and offer an honest appraisal of a situation.

Cancer Put muscle behind your ideas if you want to accomplish more than you expected. A partnership looks promising and can be just what you need to help achieve your goal.

Leo Make plans to get out and enjoy the festivities going on in your community. Offer to lend a helping hand, but don't take on responsibilities that will add to your stress.

Virgo Not everyone will agree with you when it comes to matters concerning home and family. Look for reasonable ways to appease others without overspending.

Libra You can make some alterations at home that will bring back fond memories. Use your imagination and share your take on the past year with the people you love.

Scorpio Focusing on personal growth and exploring new possibilities will lead to positive change. Share your thoughts with someone affected by your decisions.

Sagittarius Keep your personal information a secret. Use your imagination and do things your way. Working toward something meaningful is encouraged.

Capricorn If you pour your heart and soul into what you want to accomplish, your dedication and hard work will pay off. Rely on your intuition and experience to guide you.

Aquarius Keep your feelings secret for now. Monitor a situation you face with a friend or relative closely, but don't address issues without having all the facts.

Pisces An opportunity should be looked at closely. Consider where an offer is coming from and question the other party's motives before you decide to accept it. **EUGENIA LAST**

Yesterday's answers

P	A	T	C	H		S	T	E	A	M		Z	E	E
C	R	E	P	E		C	H	I	N	O		E	L	M
T	I	A	R	A		A	U	R	A	S		R	I	B
			D	O	D	G	E		Q	U	O	T	E	
L	A	P	D	O	G	S			M	U	S	S	E	D
E	L	A	I	N	E		A	D	I	E	U			
V	E	E	S		E	X	T	R	A		R	O	A	M
E	R	A	T			R	O	I			P	U	C	E
E	T	N	A		L	A	M	P	S		E	T	T	A
			S	L	A	Y	S		P	A	R	R	O	T
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I	V	I	E	S		V	A	U	N	T				
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E	R	G		O	U	N	C	E		S	T	A	R	E
D	Y	E		N	E	S	T	S		T	H	O	R	N

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